hand skirmish ensued, which ended in Tola's band being entirely dispersed, leaving Tola, his two sons, and five of his men dead on the field. Our loss was two of my police killed. Tola fought splendidly. When the fresh men came up his people began to give, but Tola called out, 'Oh, my men, don't run! Follow me!' His two sons and one or two others sprang to his side and he made a dash into the centre of my police, and such was the prestige of his name that none of them dared face him, until an old sergeant of great repute for courage met him, and, after a short hand-to-hand combat with assegais, killed him.

The next day I got a letter from Colonel Maclean, in great alarm at the news that Tola had collected a formidable band, and that men were joining him from all quarters; and telling me that as it was so distant from my place, he had put the matter in the hands of another magistrate who was much nearer, and whom he had desired to collect a hundred or a hundred and fifty men, and endeavour to break up this band; but that if I could conveniently render him assistance he would be glad. You may fancy I rather chuckled at having done it while they were talking about it.

Tola was a noted man, and his death is felt as a relief all over the frontier; and I have received high encomiums from Colonel Maclean.

I can't help ascribing Basil's lines to Tola:

> 'Fell as he was in deed and mind,
> He left no bolder heart behind.' [4]

Another year went by; a year of long and hazardous rides, of administrative work among his Kaffirs, of reading, and studying his profession, and of writing letters so full of incident, adventure, observation and criticism, that one or two more may be quoted. The first pays a tribute to the loyalty of the Kaffirs:

You have taken rather too dark a view of my position among 'my savages.' It is true I have no Europeans to

[4] Kingwilliamstown, December 29, 1858, to Mrs. Vernon.

help me here, but I have many very faithful Kaffirs among whom I would trust my life as willingly as among the same number of Europeans, and my property more willingly. They have very strong ideas of honour on some points, and whatever plots there might be against my authority I have no fear of any against my life. Even were I to know that my people were united to throw off their obedience to me and to Government, I would remain here to the very last with confidence, knowing that they would allow me to retire unmolested.[5]

Another letter describes a system which has been the source of much of our trouble in South Africa.

The Kaffirs say, and with considerable justice, that no one has ever yet gained by intercourse with the English Government; there could not be a more favourable opportunity for refuting this. We are constantly asserting that we do not fight for the sake of conquest, but in self-defence; there could not be a better proof than, after punishing a chief who has been almost constantly plotting against us, to cede a large part of his country to a chief who has shown himself friendly to us.

Against all this there is only the insatiable grasping of the colonists for more land. They have already ten times as much land as they can really fill, and there are incessant complaints of the thinness of the European population on the frontier, and yet by constantly extending the frontier they thin the population still more. Every man who can muster half a dozen cows and a score of sheep thinks himself entitled to a farm of two or three thousand acres, and ill-used if he does not get one. From this constant move and spread, one sees magnificent farms of perhaps three thousand acres, of which a thousand is beautiful rich arable land, held by a man who makes no further use of it than to rear fifty or sixty head of cattle or a few hundred sheep on it, and cultivate about twenty acres. I must say I think the country occupied by Kaffirs looks much less desolate

[5] Idutsba, October 4, 1858, to his mother.

and uncivilised than that occupied by the English. Except in the immediate neighbourhood of a town you see ten times the population, ten times the number of cattle, and twice as much land under cultivation in the Kaffir districts.[6]

The first chapter of Colley's life in South Africa was now drawing to a close. War had been declared with China; the 'Queen's' was to go thither. The news came very suddenly to the frontier post at Idutsha one evening in December, when Colley was sitting writing to his mother.

Nine P.M. Off to China! So there goes Staff, Brevet Majority, and all my castles in the air! Colonel Maclean wishes me to remain, and says that, with my permission, he will apply to the Commander-in-Chief for authority for me to do so, and has no doubt of success. But, though I feel pretty confident that I should see more fighting here in the course of another two years than I shall in China (and here I should fight as 'top-sawyer,' instead of as a wretched subaltern), still the regiment is supposed to be going on active service, so of course I shall request Colonel Maclean *not* to apply.

Well, at any rate, I am in a fair way of seeing something of the world. You may look out for next letter being dated Imperial Palace, Pekin.[7]

In this letter we get a glimpse of the soldiers that stood in the battalions of the British army up to the time of the Crimean War. The 'Queen's' was one of the few regiments still having in its ranks these matchless men.

It is a satisfaction to go on service with such a fine body of men. I saw them on parade the other day (we have nearly all the regiment at Kingwilliamstown), and certainly they were a magnificent regiment. The contrast between

[6] Idutsha, July 26, 1859, to his mother.

[7] Idutsha, December 27, 1859.

them and regiments lately come here from other stations is perfectly ridiculous.

Then came the good-bye to the Kaffirs:

Early in the morning the people began to assemble at a little distance from my house, and by 10 o'clock all the chiefs and headmen, each attended by a counsellor and a few followers, had arrived.

Presently one of the chiefs came and said the people were assembled. Would I come and hear their words? The people were squatted on the grass, forming about half or three-quarters of a circle, leaving at the top a vacant space in the middle of which was a tree, under whose shade I used often to sit when hearing cases; this was left as my throne. The chiefs sat a little in front, their counsellors and headmen a little behind them, and behind them again the people in a double or treble line. As I came up and took my place under the tree I was received with a deep 'Moro, inkos,' or 'Moro, maho' ('moro' is a kind of corruption of our 'morrow,' and is the usual Kaffir salutation; the first syllable is drawn out very long and deep; 'inkos' is chief, 'maho' father, and the chiefs generally address me as the latter). This deep-toned salutation from three or four hundred mouths at once has a most curious effect. Rising to receive any one forms no part of Kaffir etiquette—they all remained sitting or lying.

Siwani, Umhala's son, and the principal chief among my people, then addressed me. He thanked me for my words; said if they had been allowed any choice in the matter they would not have let me go; but as the Queen ordered it he supposed there was no help; that Gawler and I had brought them there, that Gawler was gone, and now I was going, and they would have no one left who knew them and to whom they could look. . . . Every chief, headman, and some of the sergeants of my police made a speech in turn, expressive of their regret at losing me. Some were comical (at least to English ears), some very poetical in language and ideas. I was 'the cow that gave much good milk' (the highest compliment a Kaffir thinks he can pay to a

man's liberality); 'the great bull that protected the herd;' the 'great eagle of the Bashee under whose wings they had found shelter;' the 'lion whose roar had sufficed to frighten their enemies from coming nearer,' &c.

It is astonishing how closely their terms and expressions resemble those of Scripture: 'Eating of the fat of the land,' 'the light of thy countenance will no longer shine on us,' 'a land flowing with milk'—all these are common Kaffir expressions. The prettiest speech made was by Sigidi, a chief next in rank to Siwani, and closely related to Kreli. He is a thoroughly savage Kaffir, has seen very little of the English, and not made the smallest step towards civilisation. He is a young man, slight and graceful, with an exceedingly pleasant countenance; small features, beautiful teeth and ears, hands and feet that any English lady might envy. He is of some repute among the Kaffirs as an orator, and, certainly, his language was wonderfully beautiful and poetic—so much so that I should be afraid to convey any of his speech, adorned as it was by his graceful action. The following, which was a speech made by one of the minor chiefs, as well as I can recollect it, may serve as a specimen of the general style:

'Oh! my chief, this is heavy news that my ears have heard to-day. Why does Government treat us so and take our father from us? If there were green fields all the way to where he is going, his children would follow him, but the black man cannot travel on the sea—he dies on it.

'When we came up here the wolves followed us, but you turned on them and killed the old he-wolf, and the rest fled. They tried to come again, but, like the bull, you watched for the herd while it was grazing, and the herd has grown fat. But where now is our bull with the high crest? When the wolves see he is gone, they will collect again from all quarters, and the herd will be scattered over the face of the earth. Why did you bring us here to leave us?' [8]

When the speech-making was over, Colley rose to go. All crowded round to shake hands. 'I was

[8] Idutsha, December 28, 1859, to his younger sister.

carried backwards and forwards by the mass, and it was at least twenty minutes before I could get free of all the black hands trying to grasp mine. At last I mounted my horse—there was another loud "Moro" and "Bonya Englela" (a good journey)—and I cantered off. So ended my life among the Kaffirs.'

CHAPTER V

CHINA

H.M.S. 'Vulcan'—Taking the forts on the Peiho—Chinese guns, diplomacy, and markets—Pekin—The prisoners—The Summer Palace.

On February 23, 1860, the 2nd 'Queen's' embarked at East London on board H.M.S. 'Vulcan' for China. 'A horrible old tub,' writes Colley; 'a man-of-war turned into a troopship, the upper deck being reserved for the naval officers and sailors, the two lower ones for the military officers and soldiers, so that in bad weather—or, indeed, unless it is very fine—we have to live entirely by lamplight, which in hot weather is most oppressive.' Truly a sensible method of conveying soldiers in a state of health and prowess to a scene of conflict, where at the moment of landing they will probably be exposed to the fullest power of an enemy to destroy them!

On the 7th we sighted Java, and since then every hour unfolds some fresh and more beautiful panorama—the skies are cloudless, the sea like a lake, with just sufficient breeze to keep the air fresh, while on each side are Java, Sumatra, and innumerable smaller islands in all the beauty of tropical vegetation.[1]

Then through the Straits of Sunda and up to Banca, that passage so fatal to sailors, where again the scene suddenly changed.

The nearest approach to hell I have ever seen or could

[1] Off Sumatra, April 11, 1860, to Mrs. Vernon.

have dreamt of. On each side the shores of Banca and Sumatra, a mile or two distant, stretch away in a long, low, unbroken line of rank swampy forest—from the edge of which the mud reaches out till it is lost in the equally muddy waters; as far as the eye can reach, there does not seem to be a mound six feet high. The sun strikes down with a deadly vertical glare, under which the decks of the ship blister, and even the water seems to swelter and putrefy and has an unpleasant smell. As the ship glides through, it seems to make way heavily and close in at once without a ripple. In perfect unison with the scene was the melancholy-looking wreck of a ship, aground on a mud bank, and the half-putrid body of a sailor which floated past the ship, and slimy snakes the only living things to be seen—the whole scene so dreary, oh! so dreary! The recollection of those Straits hangs on my mind like a nightmare.[2]

Then to Singapore and Hong-kong, where a hundred types of Asia are to be seen—Chinese, Malays, Javanese, Hindus—compared with whom 'I think my dear old Kaffirs are far and away the finest race. The Malays and Javanese are chattering monkeys, not to be named in the same list with them as men. I have seen nothing to compare with the magnificent limbs, easy and graceful motion, and upright and dignified bearing of my dear old Kaffirs.'

On June 23 the 'Vulcan' reached the rendezvous in Ta-lien-wan Bay, at the entrance to the Gulf of Pechili, where the army for the invasion of China was assembled previous to crossing the gulf to the Peiho River.

Here the 'Queen's' got on shore, and right glad must they have been, after four months of imprisonment in these foul-smelling dark lower decks, to feel solid ground again under foot. After a month's delay at Ta-lien-wan, a place then unmarked on any

[2] Chinese journal.

maps, but now grown famous as the probable terminus of the Russian Pacific Railway, the whole fleet of war-ships and transports started on July 26, 'a beautiful day and a most magnificent sight, lines of sails extending to the horizon in every direction.' Two days later they came to anchor off the Peiho River. Another shift of anchorage brought the fleet, now joined by the French ships, to a spot between the Peiho and the Peitang forts, still eight miles from shore.

Here it was settled that our brigade and 3,000 of the French were to force a landing, attack the Peitang forts in concert with the gunboats, and cover the disembarkation of the rest of the forces, and on August 1 we started with three days' provisions and whatever we could carry on our shoulders. The troops were in large flat-bottomed boats, towed by gunboats, each gunboat having a tail of six or eight troop boats. Admiral Hope, in his tender, the 'Coromandel,' led the way, and next to him came our regiment in the post of honour. About thirty-six gunboats, each with its tail of boats crammed with troops, followed, and the glistening bayonets, the varied uniforms, and the excitement on all the faces, made up as spirit-stirring a scene as I ever witnessed.

Gradually the forts began to rise to view, looking like little rocks or islands, before the shore was visible; then we could see the men crowding on the walls, and the guns in the embrasures, and every one was looking out for a flash and puff of smoke; but not a shot was fired, and on went the 'Coromandel,' till well within shot she ran along a muddy spot of land, which was to be the point of disembarkation. Had the Chinese now opened fire, they might have done immense damage, as every shot would have told on our thickly packed masses. . . . During the night some of our staff officers, going a little way into the town, learnt that the fort was evacuated. So all our scientific combinations were wasted. What made them abandon the place is a puzzle to every one; the only reason I can assign is that the

place is too much of a *cul-de-sac* for Chinese, who, like Kaffirs, don't like fighting without a good line of retreat. . . .

The morning after we came in here a force was sent out to reconnoitre. After a time our brigade was advanced and a couple of companies of ours thrown forward to skirmish. We had three hit in our regiment.

The next letter describes the taking of the entrenchments at the head of the causeway near the Peiho forts.

When the second division arrived they found large masses of Tartar cavalry drawn up in front of the entrenchment. Our Armstrong guns were now brought to the front and opened at a range of about two thousand yards. The first few shots fell short and the Tartars advanced boldly upon them. But after a few shots the gunners got the range, and then the terrible effects of the Armstrong gun might be seen. At every shot a regular gap was torn through the line, and horses without riders, men without their horses, could be seen flying from the spot. Still the Tartar cavalry advanced, until within three hundred yards of the guns, when the fire of the infantry staggered them, and they began to waver. Then the Sikh cavalry, almost mad with impatience, was let loose and charged down on them, headed by their officers, who have, and I believe with justice, the reputation of being the best swordsmen and most gallant and dashing horsemen in the army. Major Fane, who commands one regiment, was the first among them, and had cut down three before any of his men were up. In a few minutes the Tartars broke, scattered, and were being pursued for miles across the plain between the entrenchment and Singho.

I saw the Sikh cavalry as they came in after the charge, shaking their lances; and with their picturesque accoutrements, beautiful seat on horseback, and fiery flashing eyes, they certainly were the beau ideal of dashing light horsemen.

In the meantime, our division cleared the town about ten, and had got some two miles along the main causeway when the firing on the right commenced. When within

about a thousand yards of the entrenchment, our battery of Armstrong guns opened fire, and in a few minutes dismounted every gun, and sent the Chinese helter-skelter out of the place. When we came up we found several men lying dead inside the fort, and certainly the wounds inflicted by the Armstrong guns were enough to horrify and intimidate any one. . . .

So ended the first day that the Tartars and our troops were brought into actual contact, and that the Armstrong gun was tried in actual warfare; and it left me with a feeling of pity for the poor Tartars who had to fight against such fearful odds. One thought of how one would behave oneself if opposed to an enemy as superior to us as we are to the Tartars.[3]

On the 14th another move forward was made, upon Tang-ko on the Peiho River, and about two miles in rear of the Taku forts.

At Tang-Ko a number of Chinese documents were found, and among others, it is said, a letter written immediately after our landing, desiring the Commandant to send 'that fat barbarian Elgin' to Pekin immediately.[4]

At last, on the 21st, the Taku forts were taken.

After a very heavy cannonade of two or three hours the stormers, an equal number of English and French, advanced with the scaling ladders. The Chinese for once met us manfully hand to hand, and it was nearly half an hour ere the parapet was escaladed and carried; but once inside the first fort, the Chinese loss was fearful. The only exit was at the very point which we were attacking, and consequently very few of the defenders escaped; some shut themselves up in their casemated barracks and defended themselves till they were bayoneted to a man, and others tried to escape through the embrasures on the sea front towards the next fort, and were shot as they were trying to scramble over their own ditches and defences. Very few men indeed can

[3] Singho, August 17, 1860, to his mother.

[4] August 17, 1860, to his mother.

have escaped, and I do not think their loss in that fort can have been under five hundred actually killed. Our loss was heavy also, considering the insignificance of the fort—nineteen killed outright and 130 wounded, many of them mortally. The French loss was, I believe, about the same. That evening, to the astonishment of every one, the southern fort, of twice the extent and strength of either of the northern ones, was evacuated and quietly taken possession of by the Buffs.

All these forts present a most extraordinary contrast of strength and weakness, science and folly. Alongside of enormous guns, eight and ten inch, beautifully cast in gun metal, and not worth less than 1,000*l.* each, are to be seen bows, cross-bows, and catapults that might have been used at the Siege of Troy. In the same way, with a most defective plan, the forts have been so strengthened and are so massive as to be almost impregnable from the sea. The large southern fort alone mounts 210 guns; of these some, it is true, are things made of bars of iron bound together with hoops, such as Edward III. may have used; but certainly a hundred are guns of the heaviest calibre used —thirty-two, sixty-eight, and eighty pounders. One gun, which is valued at 2,000*l.*, is a perfect specimen of Chinese labour without science. It is of pure copper, beautifully cast, but the metal made of exactly the same thickness all the way from the breech to the muzzle, and even the breech twice as thick as is necessary: the consequence is, about five tons of metal have been used to turn out a gun which will throw a shot about the same weight to a shorter distance than one of our twenty-four pounders requiring about one ton of metal.[5]

After the capture of the Taku forts the allied force remained at Peiho until August 30, and then marched to Tien-tsin. The weather was now very warm, but the country had changed from the brown mud swamps near the coast to a vast garden, 'loaded with splendid peaches, apricots, apples, pears, grapes, &c., besides

[5] Camp on the Peiho, August 24, 1860, to Mrs. Vernon.

vegetables of all descriptions. You cannot think how pretty the troops looked, forming a long red line, winding through a lane in this rich mass of green trees.'

When Lord Elgin came to Tien-tsin

He was met by two Chinese bigwigs who brought down full powers to treat. After nearly a fortnight's discussion they agreed to every point, and a day was fixed on which to sign the treaty. When the day came the Mandarins quietly told him they had only authority to treat—and not to sign. Lord Elgin, finding he had already been bamboozled out of a fortnight of the fine weather (and we have not much time to spare before the frost sets in), immediately replied that in that case he must come to Pekin and see the Emperor himself, and broke up the conference.[6]

In this letter we get a picture of a Chinese market, almost of greater interest to-day than when it was written:

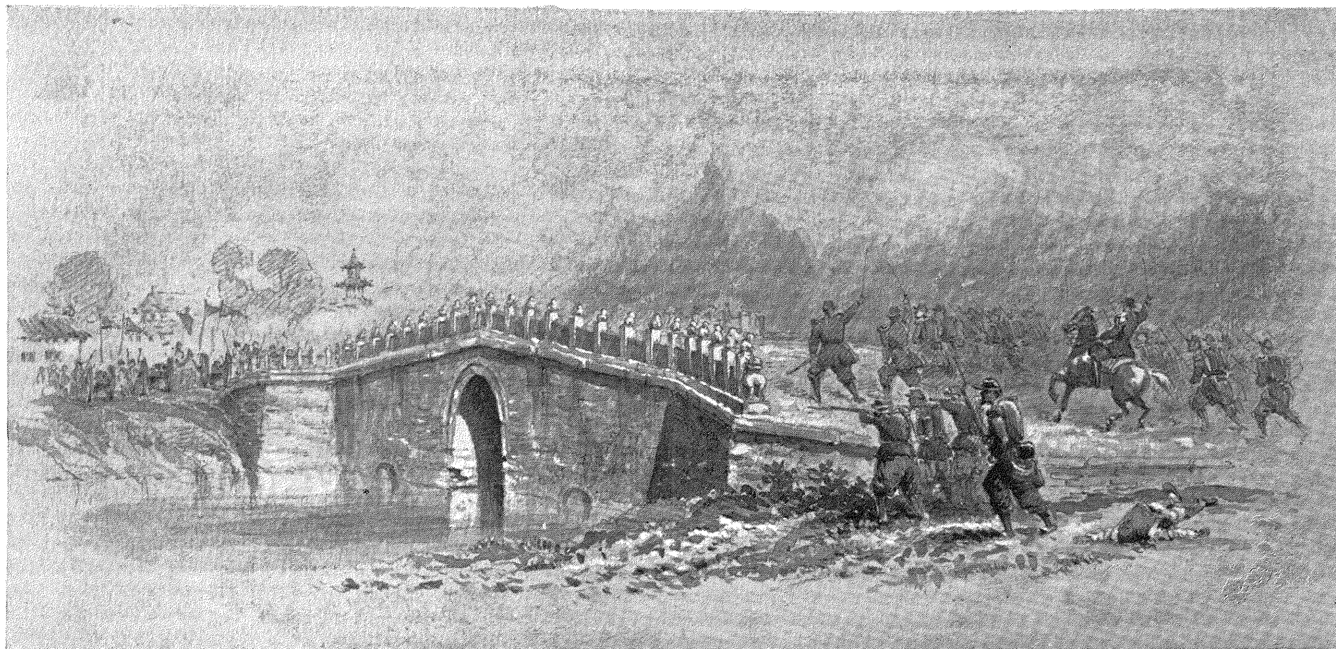
Here we are living more comfortably and luxuriously than I ever lived before in a camp. There is a most magnificent market established here — splendid grapes, apples, melons and peaches to any amount for next to nothing, eggs four a penny, grapes 2*d.* a pound, peaches from two to ten a penny, ice 4*d.* a hundredweight. We are like a lot of schoolboys eating fruit all day.

No wonder the 'outer' and ill-fed 'barbarian' is to-day hungering after such a land.

Towards the end of September in camp near Tong-chow, seven miles from Pekin, Colley gives an account of the march from Tien-tsin. He was acting as staff-officer to his regiment.

After the hottest march I have ever made, over roads

[6] Tien-tsin, September 9, 1860, to his younger sister.



BRIDGE NEAR TONG-CHOW, SEPTEMBER 21, 1860

To face p. 62

The French infantry reached the bridge while the Tartars were still crossing it

knee-deep in dust, we reached the camp of the main column at Hosinoo, on September 16 after dark, and at three the next morning we were off in fighting order. . . . By and by large numbers of Tartar cavalry appeared in sight, and began moving round us, threatening our baggage. The column was immediately halted and formed up ready for action. . . .

Our regiment was ordered to advance in skirmishing order against a small village occupied by the Tartars. Presently I was ordered with two companies to protect the battery of guns on our left, who were threatened by large masses of cavalry. I was just disposing my two companies to meet the cavalry when, suddenly, Fane and his regiment burst from behind their cover with couched lances. The Tartars seemed inclined for one minute to meet them boldly, but as the leading files crossed they turned panic-struck, and in a second the gallant Sikhs had ridden through and through them, and riderless horses were galloping in all directions. Most of the day I was attached to the guns, and it was killing work for my men, loaded as they were, to keep up with the guns, especially as the ground we had to go over was nearly as bad as the staked ground in front of the Peiho forts. The ground was all cornfields just reaped, and the Chinese in reaping their Indian corn cut each stem separately by a slanting cut, leaving a number of regular stakes, as strong almost as bamboo, standing all over their fields.

On the 21st at daylight in the morning we moved out to attack the Tartar camp around Tong-chow, and, if it should be found necessary, escalade Tong-chow itself. The French force amounted to twelve guns, about one hundred wretchedly mounted cavalry, and 1,300 infantry; our force to 1,900 infantry, 900 cavalry, and eighteen guns.

The country, as usual, is perfectly level, and the corn crops with which it is covered were in the spike state, but it is much prettier than anything we have yet seen, being sprinkled in every direction with clumps of large trees, and large and very handsomely planted cemeteries, most beautiful burying-places, with formal rows of magnificent trees outside, and

inside dark pines and cypress so thick that not a ray of the sun can pierce through. These cemeteries had mostly been used by the Tartars as their camping grounds.[7]

In the same letter there is an account of 'spoiling a Tartar reconnaissance:'

About midday we reached the canal near the bridge of boats shown in the sketch, where we halted and awaited orders, the General having as usual gone skying with the cavalry all over the country. We had been there three hours when some of us, who had gone a little way across the canal to reconnoitre, saw two Tartar officers, apparently great swells, and attended by half a dozen followers on foot, come out of a clump of trees about a thousand yards higher up the canal and reconnoitre us. Thinking we might spoil their reconnaissance, the Colonel and myself got rifles, and, taking three or four men, crept along the canal under cover of the reeds towards them. We had got nearly opposite when, about four hundred yards off and on the opposite side of the canal, we saw several hundred Chinese infantry resting themselves under the trees. Getting under cover of a bit of a bank we let drive a volley at them; hardly had the sound of the last shot died away when there came back such a volley! Matchlocks, jingalls, and even a couple of round shot were all discharged at our unfortunate party, and, as we lay crouching under the bank, a story came to my mind, told, I think, in Napier's memoirs, of an Irish sailor who in some boat attack, when the fire was exceedingly hot, being reproved for ducking by the officer in command, and ordered to hold his head up, answered, 'I will, sir, *when there's room for it*.' I am sure there was not room for ours over the bank for a second or two! However, we returned to the charge, and, being all pretty good shots, had succeeded in making the Tartars take shelter behind the trees when orders were given by the Brigadier for a wing of ours and a wing of the 15th Punjab Native Infantry to cross the canal and drive them out of their position.

[7] September 22, 1860, to Mrs. Vernon.

Our left wing, to which I belong, was sent. For the first time we came across considerable numbers of Chinese infantry; we drove them out of four camps in succession, and inflicted considerable loss on them. . . .

Tong-chow, it appears, is not to be touched, the Mandarins opening the gates to us immediately, declaring they had no connection with the Tartar soldiery.

Mr. Parkes and the prisoners (including the 'Times' correspondent, another civilian, two English Staff officers, two French ones, and an escort of twenty-five Sikh cavalry) are still in their hands, and nothing is known of their fate.

Pekin, October 8.—Here we are quietly established under the walls of the Imperial city.

Lord Elgin is to enter Pekin, and the treaty is to be signed this afternoon. Sinister rumours of treachery are about, but Lord Elgin takes in a strong escort, and if anything is attempted three guns fired in rapid succession are to be the signal for the army to turn out; if, on the other hand, all goes right, a royal salute of twenty-one guns is to announce to the troops the conclusion of peace.

A few weeks later he gives the story of the British and French prisoners who had fallen into the hands of the Tartar soldiery:

The fate of the prisoners taken on the 18th has at last come out, and a melancholy one it is. With the exception of Mr. Parkes, Mr. Loch, and about four others, they were all cruelly murdered, not in hot blood, but by deliberate and constant torture and illtreatment, such that the strongest constitutions gave way under them—'died of fright,' as the Chinese had the cold-blooded insolence to call it—the term being applied to one of the most dashing officers of the Indian Army, and to men who would have faced and fought their way out through hundredfold odds.[8]

The next letter shows us the Emperor's summer

[8] Pekin, October 16, 1860, to his mother.

palace, the 'garden of perpetual brightness,' as it was called—that wonder of the Eastern world :—

I have just returned from walking along the walls overlooking the city, which perhaps alone in the world is unknown to Europeans, and not made stale by constant description.

The walls of Pekin are about forty feet high, and eighty wide at the base. At the top there is a carriage way at least sixty feet in width. The length round the city is about sixteen miles.

We are due north, occupying one of the gates on the northern face. The gates are about one and a half miles apart, two or three to each face. Each gate is double, with a huge kind of pagoda building over them. Looking from our gate over the city and surrounding country is as magnificent a view as one can well conceive. The city lies on a dead level, which continues unbroken eastwards to the sea. But towards the north, south, and west, this flat is enclosed by an amphitheatre of magnificent rugged snow-covered mountains. Up to the foot of these mountains the country is of the same uniform level, and, being thickly planted with trees, looks almost like a forest. The mountains are very beautiful, the nearer ones showing endless lights and shadows in their gaps and clefts, while over them are seen the more distant snow-capped peaks.

In my last letter I mentioned the prisoners and their sufferings, but I did not speak of the punishment inflicted on the Emperor. In the inquiries instituted it turned out that the Emperor's summer palace, about six miles outside the walls of Pekin, had been the scene of most of their ill-treatment and tortures. This palace had been taken the day we came to Pekin, and the Treasury and principal buildings plundered by the French, who got an immense amount of valuables of all sorts out of it, the General's share alone being estimated at 120,000*l.* We only got about 30,000*l.* or 40,000*l.*, which was distributed the other day, bringing me between 40*l.* and 50*l.* It was now resolved to gut and burn to the ground this palace, and our division was sent out to do it; officers were allowed to take out carts to

carry away anything they could lay hold of. I wish I could have had two or three days to go quietly about the place before it was burnt, for many parts of it were really beautiful, and it grieved me having to burn it down. The palace occupied a space of nearly five miles each way, reaching to the foot of the mountains; it is a perfect labyrinth of wood, artificial rockwork, lakes, pagodas, buildings of all descriptions, with the willow-pattern plate most unmistakable about it all; the same lake, bridge, and building. Near the foot of the mountain there were some small steep knolls, the sides of which were thickly planted with firs and cedars; while on the summits were most beautiful porcelain buildings, and on the highest a magnificent porcelain pagoda of six or seven stories, commanding a view of the country for miles. One building we had to burn was a kind of hunting palace nestled in a nook right in among the mountains, and surrounded by forests full of game.

I have a pretty good collection of silk embroideries and robes (mostly from the imperial wardrobe, and bearing the imperial arms—a golden dragon). Our mess is taking home a magnificent china vase as a reminiscence of the palace. It was presented to them by Colonel Addison, who bought it from a soldier for a mere nothing. The amount of valuable property destroyed must have been something incalculable; china and enamel vases, worth hundreds at home, were knocking about in every direction, too bulky to be carried off; magnificent clocks with musical boxes and all kinds of complicated machinery attached were being kicked about and pulled to pieces by the soldiers, who only cared for things at once valuable and portable, like gold or jewels. The destruction of all these things certainly grieved me, but still it was something to have seen this specimen of Chinese imperial architecture, and the march there and back was uncommonly enjoyable, especially the second day, a cold brisk morning when we marched right out to the genuine wild bleak mountains; and I felt quite a kind of rapture at again putting my foot on a hill.

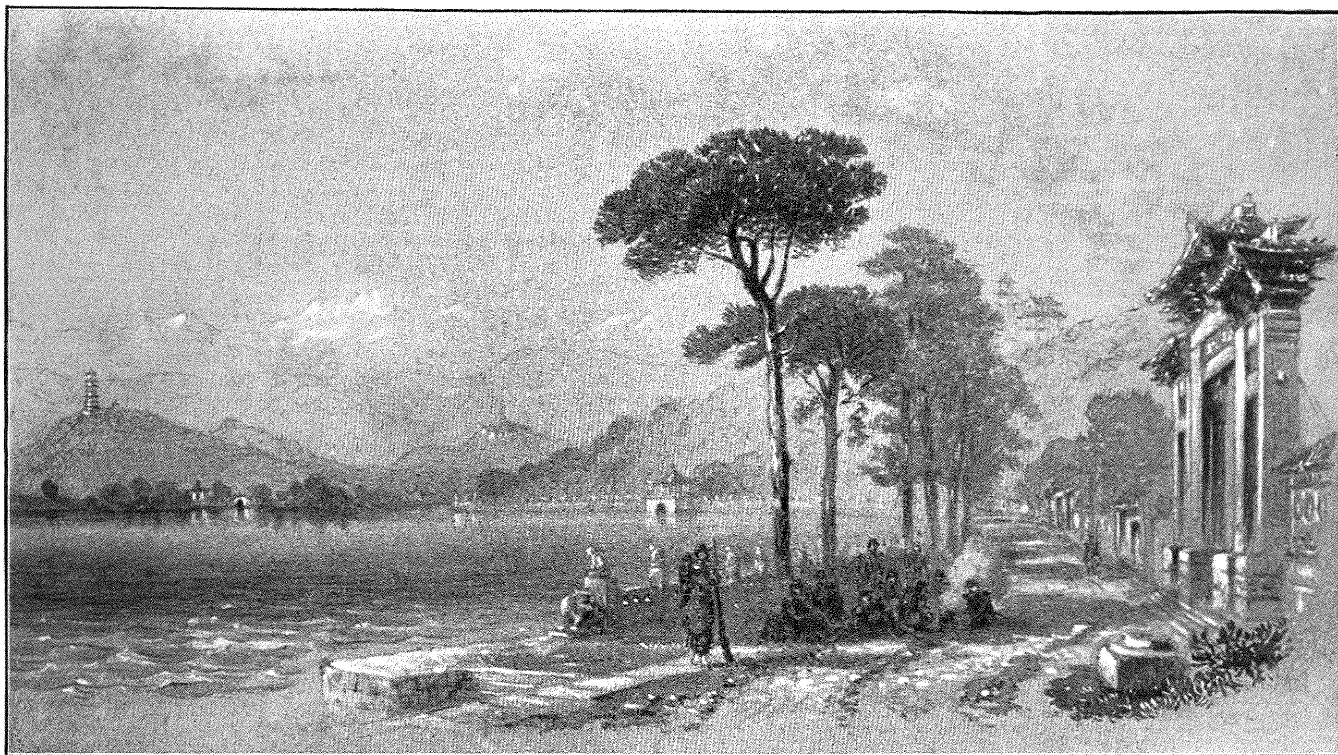
This proceeding of burning down the palace, though severe, seems to have been salutary, for whereas the Chinese

up to that time had under different pretences avoided surrendering the city, and the impression was generally entertained that it would have to be bombarded and taken by storm, the very day we returned from the palace the gate was given into our hands, and all seems to have run smoothly since, though there are many rumours of intended treachery, and Lord Elgin will not trust himself without a strong guard. Our troops occupy the gate and a space extending up the street for about 200 yards. At that distance a rope has been drawn across the street, beyond which we are not allowed to pass, and behind that rope is a mass of human heads extending back as far as one can see—Chinese, who have thronged from all parts of the city to have a look at the barbarians, and who are content to remain from early morning to dark looking in wonderment at them. The other day one of our bands played in the open space; the crowd remained quite quiet during the playing, but as soon as it was finished burst into roars of laughter!

The winter is setting in in earnest; the other night there were 15 degrees of frost. Luckily, we have lots of opportunities of providing ourselves with furs. I come out of a morning in a gorgeous blue silk dressing-gown, embroidered outside with gold dragons and lined with fur. You would laugh to see us all sitting down to dinner in magnificent embroidered fur coats reaching down to our heels.[9]

Thus ends the last letter written from China. On November 7, the treaty of peace having been ratified by the Emperor, the army broke up and marched to Tien-tsin, where it embarked in gunboats for the fleet. The Chinese War was over. What it was all about has long since been forgotten, and, with the exception of the burning of the Summer Palace, everything in connection with the campaign of 1860 has faded from the world's memory. That, however,

[9] October 23, 1860, to his younger sister.



THE SUMMER PALACE, PEKIN

To face p. 68

still dwells with us, and is likely to do so, taking its place in the annals of those acts of wanton destruction which for fourteen centuries have borne the name of the barbarian race whose king put the final seal upon the degradation of imperial Rome; but Genseric, if Gibbon is to be believed, drew the line of rapine at burning. He promised 'to protect the buildings from *fire*,' writes that historian; and when the Vandal quitted Rome the stately monuments of her power still rose amid the deserted streets.

But perhaps the most curious thing connected with the ruin of the Summer Palace was the personality of its destroyer. It was a singular destiny which decreed that this beautiful product of Eastern civilisation should be ruined by the son of the man who had mutilated the most perfect specimen of Greek art in the Western world, and that the 'Curse of Minerva' which Byron invoked at Athens in 1811 against the plunderer of the Parthenon—

> First on the head of him who did this deed
> My curse shall light on him and all his seed,

should have found, fifty years later, in the fire-ravaged 'garden of perpetual brightness,' and in the minds of millions of Eastern peoples, another

> Branding page and burning line

to hand on the memory of the malediction.

CHAPTER VI

HOME SERVICE

Homeward bound—Detained at the Cape—Staff College—Studies in tactics—Army reform

George Colley left China a captain, but by no means over-fortunate as promotion then went. He had long resolved to enter the Staff College, and the protracted voyage round the Cape seemed to offer opportunity for study which life in Kaffirland and active service in China had hitherto made difficult.

> My name has gone in for the Staff College examinations, which will take place in June next. I mean to brush up my learning during the long and tedious voyage, and have not much fear as to the result.[1]

The ship was the clipper 'Alfred,' 'one of the old Indian sailing ships. The cabins are roomy, the saloon excellent, the table kept on a most liberal footing, and everything as great a contrast as possible to that terrible old "Vulcan."'

So here on board the 'Alfred' he sets to work, reading 'mathematics principally, and finding them far more interésting than novels, or indeed anything but military history.' In other history he has a rare treat, for Froude's volumes, recently published, are on board, and in such demand that only 'random passages' can be read of them.

[1] 'The Alfred,' November 17, 1860, to Mrs. Vernon.

So far as one can form any opinion of a book from that, I far prefer him to Macaulay. One passage in particular—that description of the change taking place in men's opinions, and how all the old-established tracks of thought were being swept away about the commencement of Henry's reign—is, I think, far above Macaulay. He seems to have Macaulay's love for 'word-painting,' bringing scene after scene vividly before the eye by powerful description and attention to those little details which, while neglected by the general historian, are required to make the scenes *real*; and Froude falls into the same fault—that of impairing the general effect by making these too frequent, and thus overcrowding the mind and rendering the actual historic part very difficult to remember. But there is this essential difference in their descriptions—while Macaulay aims the most at what will bring the scene before the eye, Froude tries to give you a glimpse of the way the actors' minds were working, of the points of view from which the men of those days looked—and the result, at least to me, is that while Macaulay's characters are admirable, they are men who might have lived at any time, whereas Froude's could only have lived at that time.[2]

On February 14 the 'Alfred' reached Table Bay, and the pilot boat brought good news: 'Sir George Grey has just come down from the frontier.' Colley hopes to see him the following day. The Governor's recognition of the work done in Kaffraria might do much towards future promotion:

I look forward to the meeting with some anxiety, as I consider that my prospects in the army mainly depend on it. Somehow I generally missed him when he came up to the frontier, and I only once, I think, had the opportunity of exchanging a dozen words with him; but whether he interests himself in my behalf, or considers that my services were not sufficient to merit such an unusual step, I shall always equally feel I owe him a very heavy debt of gratitude

[2] Capetown, February 19, 1861, to Mrs. Vernon.

for the delicacy and indulgence with which he encouraged a young and inexperienced hand.

Two days later the interview took place, and the picture of the Governor is so bright and pleasant that it is worth reproducing:

I dined with Sir George last night, and breakfasted again with him this morning. I had before felt the charm of his manner in public, or when meeting him officially, but I could not conceive and I cannot describe that charm when meeting him *en famille*. Instead of, as I had expected, a stiff official dinner, it was the most free, 'homelike' party I have enjoyed since I left England—Sir George, full of the most playful fun, chaffing me about my 'Principality,' and whether I insisted on meeting the Emperor of China as a brother potentate; delighted at any good hit, even at his own expense; throwing off the Governor completely, so that it was often difficult to remember it, but always keeping his position by his clear head and shrewdness. Above all, he seemed delighted when playing with some children who were there, and was evidently an immense favourite with them, for they always came to him in their difficulties.[3]

A few days later the matter was settled. Sir George tells Colley that

he considered Gawler and myself to have been the main props of his frontier policy, and that I had earned a right to anything he could do for me.

In the course of further conversation, he said that he missed me very much on the frontier, that he was about to carry out some measures in my old district, and felt very much the want of any one on the spot in whom he had sufficient confidence.

From such a chief to such a subaltern this was enough. Colley told Sir George Grey that six or eight

[3] Capetown, February 21, 1861, to Mrs. Vernon.

months must elapse before he could enter the Staff College, and that interval of time he placed at the disposal of the Governor. He had left the old survey of the Bashee unfinished when he had taken over the duties of frontier magistrate. He would go back, ostensibly to complete that survey, and he would then be on the spot to render assistance if required. Sir George gladly accepted the offer, but foresaw difficulties in the way of detaining an officer on his homeward route from China; upon which Colley tells him it is only a whim of his, this remaining at the Cape, and begs Sir George will think no more about it. 'But he laughingly interrupted me, and said it was like offering a starving man a good dinner, and begging him on no account to eat it if it were too much trouble. He said my presence up there would at the present time above all others be most useful to him.' Then we find excuses given to the home circle for this prolonged absence. Here is the determining influence:

It has often struck me that during my service at the Cape I began many things, *but never finished anything*. Thus I began the Pensioners' Village, but as soon as it was well begun I was taken away, and the finishing of it fell to Grantham, with whose name it is consequently connected. I was then for some time employed on a watercourse at Fort Hare, which I intended should have been a grand work, but it was resolved after all not to send the German emigrants there, and it fell to the ground. Then I was employed in various ways about the German Legion; but those I always was of opinion would fail as settlers, consequently I was not sorry to be removed from that. Then I went up to survey the Transkei territory, but long before I had completed that I was withdrawn to take charge in Gawler's place. Finally, I had hoped to remain in charge of that district till all the arrangements for its settlement were completed and I could

hand it over in perfect order to the regular civil authorities; but before one step was taken towards deciding the ultimate fate of the country I was withdrawn, just as the return of Sir George Grey gave some prospect of matters being brought to an end.

Thus, though each change was an advancement, I left the country, after five years' service actively spent, without being able to point to one single work *carried out* by me. And though many might consider it fanciful, I feel that you and John can sympathise with me in my desire not to leave the country without 'leaving my mark' in at least one work begun and executed by me—not liking to remain open to the imputation of having *begun* many things but never completed anything.

The survey of the Transkeian territory is the one which offers itself, but I am not sure whether I may not come in for the completion of another and still more favourite work—viz., the final settlement of that district.

Finally, can you wonder at my preferring such active, thinking, useful life to the idleness of duty in a garrison town in England?[4]

So on February 27, 1861, the Capetown garrison orders contain the following notice: 'At the request of his Excellency the Governor the services of Captain Colley, 2nd "Queen's," are placed at his disposal. That officer will accordingly be detained at the Cape of Good Hope.' Destiny, with singular pertinacity, had in store for this young officer a continuance of the ill fortune alluded to in this letter. Exactly twenty years later to a day Major-General Sir George Colley was to fall by a Boer bullet on the summit of Majuba Hill, his work in South Africa still unfinished.

Now for nine months longer he is back in Kaffraria again. When leaving for China he had doubted

[4] Table Bay, February 25, 1861, to Mrs. Vernon.

the reality of the regret shown by the Kaffirs at his departure; the welcome they give him makes him ashamed of former disbelief.

The Kaffir police raised by Gawler used to call themselves Gawler's police. But on my taking over charge they dropped his name and assumed mine, 'Ama Polisa Ke Koli.' On my departure, however, they refused to adopt my successor's name, and they still bear no other name but mine.

But what I considered as my greatest triumph was that I actually succeeded in begging an ox out of an old Kaffir chief. Shortly after my arrival I went to his kraal, and told him how I had been engaged in a most serious war—how I had lost all I possessed and was come back poor and a nobody—how when I reached the Cape I bethought me of my old friends up on the frontier, and had come up to see if they really felt for me as they used to profess to, and would help me in my distress; that I came to him first, as one of the oldest servants of Government, to beg a cow, which I should then be able to show in pride to the other chiefs as a present from the great chief Dushani. He listened very attentively, sent for his counsellors, and then told me that I had done right to come to them in my trouble, that their hearts were still with me, and he only wished he had the means of helping me as his heart would desire, but that he had lost a great many cattle during my absence, and had hardly milk enough for his children; he could not, therefore, give me a cow, but he would give me an ox, which was accordingly driven up. However, his funny old face decidedly brightened when I explained to him that it was all chaff on my part, and after a number of pretty speeches ended in giving *him* a present instead.[5]

Another picture of Kaffraria and its people explains a good deal of the fascination attaching to wild life in South Africa:

I have lately been among scenes vividly recalling my first acquaintance with the Transkei district. For some time

[5] Transkei, April 27, 1861, to his younger sister.

I encamped on the very spot where we spent the first night after crossing the Kei in the expedition against Kreli in 1858. It was on a small stream, which immediately below us fell over a sheer rock more than a hundred feet high into a deep and beautiful basin. In the evening (I recollect) our Kaffirs went through a kind of sham fight, the main bodies occupying the slope of two ridges in heavy masses, while their skirmishers were thrown forward in the valley, taking advantage of every bush and stone for cover, and darting from one to the other with a zigzag motion which almost defied the eye to follow them. The main body all the time kept up a low, monotonous, but singularly wild and exciting chant, every now and then breaking forth into a yell of encouragement and applause when any of the skirmishers were supposed to perform any clever or gallant feat. The whole scene in the rapidly growing darkness was one of the wildest and most picturesque you could conceive.[6]

Perhaps from these two extracts we can understand the nature of the feelings that deepen in him as the moment draws near for finally leaving his work on the frontier. These wild men had won their way into his heart, and these beautiful scenes of kloof and water, of mountains and flowering forests, had become woven into the very fibre of his life. In comparison with these civilisation seemed to him tame and vapid. Nevertheless, when his old appointment as Transkeian magistrate was pressed upon him, in the most flattering terms, he refused it. He was not prepared to renounce a military career even for the sake of the prospects open to him in South Africa, and he writes to Colonel Maclean :

The Duke of Cambridge has only authorised my remaining out here for the time necessary to complete the survey

[6] Transkei, August 15, 1861, to Mrs. Vernon.

of the Transkei; to remain longer would necessitate my leaving my regiment.

The Staff College, for which I am about to be examined, will require my presence in England in February or March at the latest, by which time I calculate on completing the survey.[7]

Notwithstanding this decision, his letters show the reluctance with which he turned from the freshness and the unlimited possibilities of South Africa to the untried English life, which at this time seems only to have presented itself to him in its trivial aspects. His family wonder how he can prefer these savage scenes to the fenced fields and walled roads of civilisation. He answers from 'Camp on the Tora:'

I confess I cannot quite understand how you can continue to wonder at my preferring the life I lead out here to the cultivated life at home—a kind of mental self-nursing, useless, or nearly so, to any one but oneself. Fancy exchanging the position I should be in as frontier magistrate, trusted by my superiors, looked up to by the thousands under me, looked upon by a large part of the colony as the great shield between them and war; every day and every hour of the day compelled to think and act for myself on questions involving great numbers of people, and to cultivate my mind in the true school for mental cultivation—action—fancy, I say, exchanging this by preference for a 'cultivated life,' picking up pretty ideas and perhaps repeating them, making pretty drawings, &c., and feeling oneself of no earthly use to any one. I don't think ambition is the selfish evil passion writers are so fond of making it out to be. For instance, offer to make an ambitious man a king, surrounded by all the pomp and homage and luxury of his rank—but a 'Roi Fainéant'—and how many would you find to take it? There would be plenty of men of small minds and petty vanity ready to grasp it, but none of those usually known as *ambitious*. It is the

[7] August, 1861, to Colonel Maclean.

power *they* would look to, and that not for their own sakes, but for the sake of others. There are, I presume, few such demons as to covet power for the sake of injuring, not benefiting, others.[8]

Here, then, we have his purpose in life—work for the sake of work, ambition for large ideals.

Two months before this last letter was written Colley had gone to Kingwilliamstown for examination for entrance to the Staff College. There were thirteen vacancies and fifty candidates. Writing to his mother he says:

You must not be disappointed if I do not take my old Cheam and Sandhurst places. It has not been a fair race to me. If, however, I come out badly on *leaving* the College, you *may* feel disappointed! The examination went against me in many ways. Several changes have been introduced on the former arrangements, which, of course, candidates at home would be aware of, but of which I was not, and all these changes were against me.[9]

Subjects which he had not taken up had been unexpectedly substituted for those in which he was a proficient. He had none of the advantages of text-books, coaching, &c., and his extremely active life had rendered any real course of study impossible. Nevertheless, with all these things against him, he passed third on the list of successful candidates, and, quitting the Cape in January 1862, arrived in England at the end of February to enter the Staff College in March, one month after the usual time of entrance. At first he is disappointed at 'the way time is wasted'—the students not separated into classes, but working together irrespective of difference in their attainments.

[8] November 6, 1861, to Mrs. Vernon.
[9] Camp on the Isomo, November 29, 1861, to his mother.

By being compelled to attend lectures and studies I am kept from nine till five, and yet do not get through as much work as I could do in three hours by myself.

I find myself a perfect schoolboy again, tied down closely, but without acquiring anything to compensate. So I am thinking of going through the course in one year instead of two; the two years' course will about make one year's good reading, so I shall at least have the satisfaction of not wasting my time.[1]

It is clear that in his own thoughts he somewhat resented the unaccustomed restrictions of a student's life. In the following November, when he was just 26, the final examination began. Though he had been a bare nine months at work, and all the men who competed at the final trial had been two years in the College, Colley passed out first, obtaining a total of 4,274 marks, the largest aggregate number ever before obtained, and more than 500 in excess of the second competitor. Immediately afterwards a brevet majority was given him in recognition of his frontier services in South Africa; the tide of his good fortune was now on the rise.

Upon leaving the College Colley went to learn practical artillery work at Woolwich, with the reputation of having passed the most brilliant staff examination on record. After Woolwich he joined the 10th Hussars at Newbridge, remaining with the cavalry arm for another six months. 'When leaving the cavalry the general in Dublin applied for me as his brigade-major—a compliment which I appreciated, coming from a cavalry man to an infantry officer—but the Horse Guards would not hear of it.'

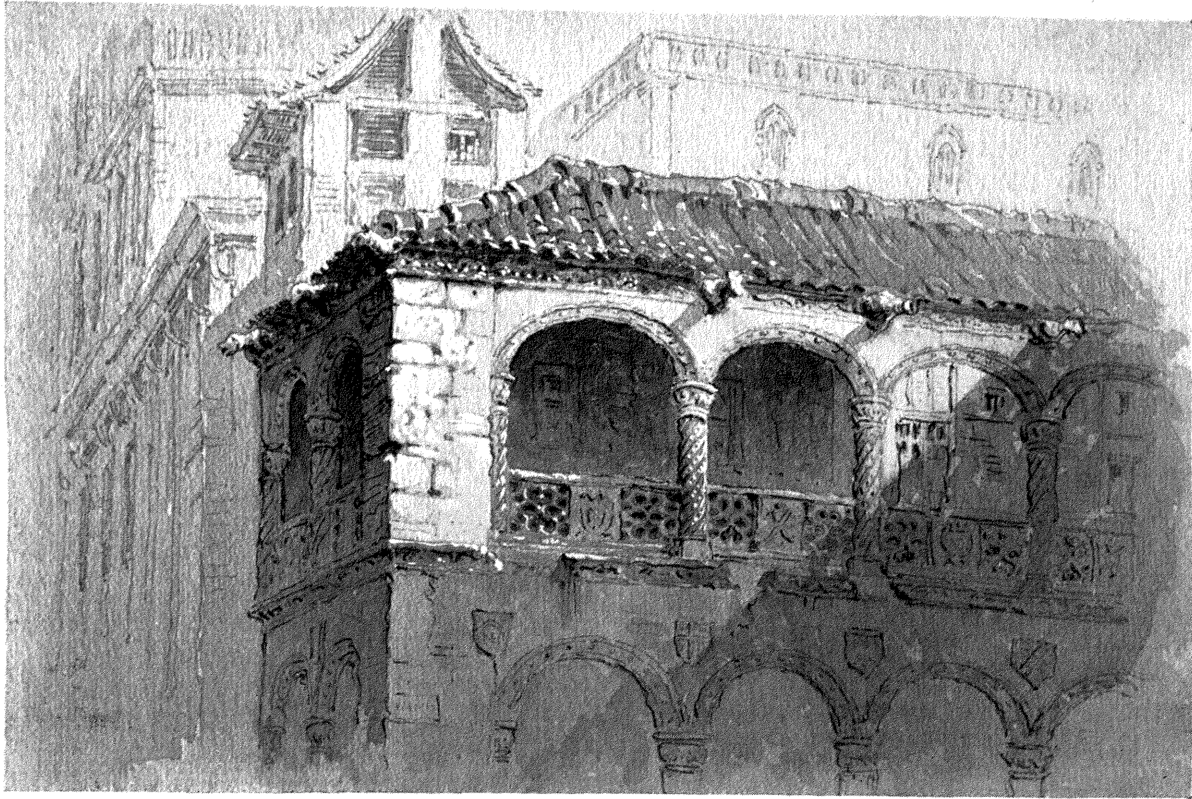
However, in July 1864, the appointment of

[1] Staff College, April, 1863, to his mother.

brigade-major at Devonport was offered to and accepted by him; this position he held during the five following years. That these were busy years the letters written by him to friends and professional acquaintances bear witness. I find the following account of that period in a short autobiographical summary written for his wife some years later. 'During these five years I did a good deal of travelling and sketching through southern England, and on Dartmoor especially. I spent one winter's leave in Algeria. Another I spent in the south of France, and another going over Napoleon's battlefields in the north along the Seine, and at Chalons and Laon. In '69 I made a sketching tour in Spain, visiting all the cathedrals, as well as the scenes of Wellington's chief battles. In 1867 I was appointed Council Examiner in Military History and Art for Sandhurst, Woolwich, and the Staff College, an appointment which brought me about 100*l.* a year extra, took me to Woolwich and Sandhurst twice in the year, and brought me into contact with the Army Education Department.' In this brief record a whole world of work was embraced.

The Devonport appointment terminated in 1869, and from July of that year Colley spent some months with his regiment at Aldershot and Gosport. While there General Napier, the Director-General of Education, offered him the newly created post of head of the Garrison Instruction in England. 'I accepted it, and had made all arrangements for taking it up at Aldershot, when ——, who had apparently agreed, suddenly vetoed it on the ground that I was too junior.' [2] While Colley was still at Devon-

[2] Summary of his Life.



A BIT OF OLD SPAIN

To face p. 80

port Lord Templetown had been succeeded in the command by Sir Augustus Spencer, and when the latter went to Bombay as Commander-in-Chief in 1869 he offered the military secretaryship there to his former brigade-major; but Colley did not accept, and thus his Indian experience was deferred by seven years. At this period his connection with the work of army education had developed his passion for military history. His mind, too, had kept pace with all the advances which the improvements in modern weapons had rendered necessary in applied tactics. A review (written in 1869 in answer to a request from Captain Brackenbury[3]) of the action fought between the Prussian and Hanoverian forces at Langensalza gives the result of his studies of the Prussian system:

I am always afraid to criticise a battle unless I have carefully studied it on the ground. Still, I don't like to refuse an opinion; and one always gains by discussing these matters—so here goes. You must take my opinions for what they are worth, remembering that I have not been on the ground.

First, then, I entirely agree with the author of the 'Taktische Rückblicke' that Flies, attacking merely with the object of keeping the Hanoverians in position, should have given up all idea of defeating them (having in view their enormous superiority of numbers), and that his first care should have been the formation of a strong reserve (not to be drawn upon on any pretext) to cover the ultimate inevitable retreat.

To make my further remarks intelligible it will be better to give my notions of the Prussian system, because what strikes me most strongly in this battle is that, whereas it is frequently quoted as a failure of the Prussian system, it appears to me that the true Prussian system was departed from in almost every movement.

[3] Now Lieut.-General Sir Henry Brackenbury, K.C.B.

The principles of the perpendicular order, as I understand it, are simple and admirable.

The *advance guard* reconnoitres, opens the battle, spreads out, feels the enemy's position, ascertains the best points of attack, tries to lead the enemy to engage as many troops as possible and so weaken him for the main attack, and (on the principle of engaging as few troops at a time as possible, but getting the greatest amount out of them) often bears the brunt of the fighting and usually suffers heavily. Indeed, the French object that too much is expected of the advance guard.

The *main body* follows at such distance that it can support the advance guard if necessary, but it is not necessarily drawn into its action. It either attacks with its fresh unbroken masses on the point selected and 'searched' by the advance guard, or under cover of the latter's fight moves round and endeavours to take the enemy in flank, in which case the action of the advance guard becomes a feint. (This is what is most usually practised at their *grandes manœuvres*.) It is calculated that if the advance guard is engaged sufficiently deeply this will compel the enemy to engage some of his reserves before you have engaged any of yours.

The *reserve* supports the other two, furnishing any necessary detachments to cover the flanks, &c., but bearing in mind that its primary duty is to decide the attack or cover the retreat (for which purpose a sufficient proportion must always be kept in hand) and that every detachment is an evil if possible to be avoided.

Now c mpare Flies' action; the advance guard, having occupi d Langensalza almost without resistance, is scattered to the four winds; some companies go to the extreme left, some to the right, some occupy the village, *one* goes to the front was there ever such a dislocation? A perfect *reductio ad absurdun* of the company system. The result is that the advance guard, upon whose action so much depends, is frittered away without having even felt the enemy's true po ition, nd the main body finds itself blindly comn 'tted to an attack on an apparently impregnabl and also 'unexplored') p sition.

The main body also has no unity of action. Part has to perform the duties of the advance guard, part is held back in reserve, and ultimately becomes the last reserve! No weighty sustained attack on a selected point is made, and the greater part is buried in the Badewäldchen.

The reserve is partly also thrown into the Badewäldchen, partly sent to meet an attack which should have been provided for in the main line of battle (for it was made by part of the enemy's front line, not by his reserves), and absolutely none is left to perform the special duties of the reserve.

As these remarks may appear severe and vague I will go more into detail. The advance guard is wiped out at the very opening. What it should have done was to push forward to the mill, spread out, and *feel* the Hanoverian position. Flies would then have been made aware of its actual strength before his main body was committed. He could then either (1) have thrown his main body in a sustained and calculated attack on Maxleben; or (2), seeing the enormous odds against him, engaged partially only, attacking with just sufficient vigour to hold the Hanoverians, and taking care to keep his reserve untouched; or (3) if still determined to try and carry the Hanoverian position he might have moved his main body towards Nägelstedt, leaving the reserve to follow and pick up the advance guard. (This seems to me the only chance of forcing the position, and is a favourite Prussian manœuvre.) Of these three courses I certainly consider the second would have been the best, the third next best, and the first the worst.

The actual handling of the main body is so much a question of *terrain* that I am almost afraid to approach it—not knowing the ground. Still certain points present themselves besides the general jumble already noticed (the main body having partly to do advance guard, partly reserve, while some of the reserve is brought up into it). . . .

The employment of the reserve seems to me equally faulty. I cannot conceive with what object the battalion was thrown into the Badewäldchen, already full of troops, and never, so far as I can make out, menaced with any

severe attack. The move of the remainder to the Erbs B. raises the question, 'Is a general justified in employing his last reserves merely to prolong a struggle?' I think the answer would be '*Certainly not,*' except when there is some definite reason for prolonging it, such as the approach of reinforcements, or of night to cover the retreat. At this time Flies could have had no reasonable hope of success, as he had engaged the whole of his force without any result, while the enemy had still more than a third untouched. It was merely a question of prolonging the struggle; he gained nothing by doing so, and risked utter destruction by engaging his last reserves.

I have put what seem to me the faults on the Prussian side as strongly as possible of course more strongly than I would in a lecture—because I think this battle has been so wrongly quoted against the perpendicular order, of which I am a strong supporter. I think it will be found that in all minor actions and battles where the armies meet unexpectedly, the armies trained on this system will have a great advantage over those trained on the usual deployed line of battle system.[4]

This letter was written more than a year before the Prussian system of attack had proved its superiority in the war of 1870-71, and when it is remembered how far removed was the military mind of England in the year 1869 from the comprehension of any system of tactics other than those of the Peninsular War and the campaign of 1815, it will be allowed that the man who had thus early caught the principles and objects of modern battle tactics possessed a rare power of insight into questions upon which may depend the existence of nations.

It has not been the least of the services rendered by the Volunteer force to the regular army in England that its higher officers, many of whom were

[4] G sport, December 21, 1869, to Captain Brackenbury.

prominent politicians as well as active volunteers, were able, from their occasional contact with staff-officers of the army, to bring to the notice of their political chiefs men whose merits, under the routine and reserve of the military service, would otherwise never be known outside the immediate circle of the army. During his service as brigade-major at Devonport Colley was brought into frequent contact with many of the leading Volunteer officers of the west country. Ideas of army reform had already begun to simmer through a variety of detail changes. But the crash in 1870 of the French military system called for immediate efforts towards recasting the entire fabric of army organisation and tactical principle. A want was now felt for trained staff-officers whose minds, emancipated from the traditions of a past no longer possible, were fitted to advise the Parliamentary chiefs of the War Office. In the autumn of 1870 Sir Thomas Dyke Acland brought Major Colley's name to the notice of Lord Northbrook, then Under-Secretary of State for War, and throughout the following winter Colley worked at the War Office in the preparation of the measures for short service, abolition of purchase, and re-organisation of the army.

In an official paper of Colley's, written in October 1870, on the 'Reorganisation of the Army and Militia,' I find the entire scheme of infantry organisation, militia and reserve organisation, recruiting, and appointment of officers laid down, in clearest detail, almost precisely as these departments of army system stand to-day.

The task of reforming any involved and complicated system is more difficult than to create from the

beginning an entirely new organisation. Especially was this the case in the British army. Some of its greatest triumphs had been gained, some of its most stupendous results achieved, by the simple faculty of not knowing when it was beaten. 'Go anywhere you like' was General Pennefather's reply at Inkerman to General Cathcart, when in the middle of the battle that officer, arriving at the head of his division, asked for orders. 'Go anywhere you like; you will find plenty of fighting all round.'

It is not difficult to imagine the feelings with which officers trained in such a splendid school of invincible military ignorance would receive new ideas upon tactical subjects. And deeper still would be their indignant opposition to any project for altering the fundamental principles of an army organisation which in the past had given such splendid results. The strength of the interests arrayed against any innovation upon vested rights and established habits in the army may be judged by the fact that the total breakdown of our military organisation in the Crimea and the example of Prussian successes in the war of 1866 had failed to produce any real change in the manner in which the army was officered, recruited, organised, or drilled. Even to-day, when more than a quarter of a century has gone by, the growls of a still active discontent may be heard amongst us, though the whole world has admitted that only by some system of short service can the military strength of a nation be developed and maintained.

In the summer of 1871 Colley was appointed Professor of Military Administration at the Staff College. He held this post a little more than two years, spending the vacations as usual in visiting

foreign battlefields, to whose portentous list had then recently been added the names of Mars-la-Tour, Gravelotte, and Sedan. But those older scenes of matchless military genius—where the great Captain had engaged the legions of the Czar across the already vanquished body of Prussia—still held the highest place in his interest, and we find him travelling in Russia, in Eastern Prussia, and Poland. walking over and sketching the fields of Eylau and Friedland, as in Italy seven years earlier he had sketched and studied at Arcola and Rivoli.[5]

[5] The article 'Army' in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* was written by Colley for the edition which appeared in 1875. It may be said to have marked the close of the long period he had given to the study of military history and the principles of war.

CHAPTER VII

ASHANTI

Wolseley's expedition—West African forest—Desertion of carriers—Colley re-organises transport—Fighting at Amoaful, Fommanah, Ordahsu—On to Coomassie—Colley in '74.

THROUGHOUT the British dominions peace had prevailed, almost without break, from 1860 to 1873. And these thirteen years at home had afforded time and means for studying the principles of war, the achievements of others, the history of work in fields of bygone action. In the middle of the latter year war had broken out on the West Coast of Africa—one of those small wars of which our history is so full. Early in 1873 a large Ashanti army crossed the river Prah, the dividing line between the kingdom of Ashanti and the Gold Coast protected tribes, and after some bush fighting, in which the invaders were successful, had reached the coast in the neighbourhood of Elmina. In September of that year Sir Garnet Wolseley and a body of officers, thirty-six in number, left England for the Gold Coast. How one general and thirty-six special service officers were to infuse into the native tribes of the protectorate, already defeated and dispersed by a long series of disasters, that confidence which usually commands victorious result, had not been made clear in the instructions of the Government.

The ultimate object of the expedition was the capture of Coomassie. When Sir Garnet Wolseley landed at Cape Coast Castle on October 2, the prospect was not encouraging. The Ashanti army lay in dense forest, about ten miles distant from Cape Coast Castle, spread out along a curve of some twenty miles from right to left. No position could have been more favourable for attack from Cape Coast. The Ashanti army, estimated at from twenty-five to thirty-five thousand men, could have been annihilated by three thousand reliable troops; but the position alone was there—soldiers, in the true sense of the word, there were none.

Upon realising the exact condition of affairs Sir Garnet Wolseley lost no time in informing the Government and urging the immediate despatch of British troops. The same mail carried the following letter to Colonel Colley:

[Private.]

Just a line to tell you I have asked for a third battalion, in addition to the two which are already under orders. I have again opened the question of how it is to be raised, and have implored that it may be formed as I originally wanted all to be—*i.e.* of six companies, one to be taken from a battalion, the best captain in six battalions to choose his own subaltern and call for 109 volunteers, so that the six companies would number in all 650 men, besides officers.

I have asked that if my proposal is granted, the command of the battalion should be given to you; so you had better see somebody at the Horse Guards that you know well, to see how things go on.

If this is acceded to, select some good captains and brevet-major and urge their appointment. We have had a very successful little affair here on the 14th inst., and the

result has already been very beneficial; the only drawback is losing the services of McNeil, who is, I am sorry to say, very severely wounded. His pain must have been excruciating, but he bore it like a true soldier and made no fuss about it.

I have learnt several lessons from my recent fight, not the least being that a selected officer is worth two sent out in the ordinary way of duty according to the roster.

I hope all this can be managed. I have written privately to H.R.H. on the subject, and it is possible that my arguments may have some weight with him.

Will tell you all about the kit required. I hope to see you here.[1]

This letter reached Colley on November 18; he went at once to the War Office. The volunteer battalion was vetoed, but he was allowed to go out as a special service officer, and place his services at the disposal of Sir Garnet Wolseley. On December 4 he sailed for Cape Coast Castle, and at midnight on the 16th the 'Sarmatian' (an Atlantic liner) anchored off the town. The 'Black Watch,' Sir A. Alison, and about a dozen special service officers were on board.

By the middle of December a remarkable change had taken place in the military situation. The Ashanti army had fallen back from the neighbourhood of the coast, and the three battalions of British infantry asked for in October had reached Cape Coast Castle. But the enemy was then over the Prah; his nearest outposts were at least one hundred miles distant, and before any forward movement could be made along the route of his retreat the road to the Prah had to be completed, transport organised, and supplies collected for the march upon Coomassie.

[1] October 23, 1873, from Sir Garnet Wolseley.

And now came in the peculiar nature of the country through which the line of advance lay, and the equally strange conditions of the human and animal life inhabiting it.

We have spoken of the country as all forest, but that phrase very inadequately describes it. It was forest so dense and lofty that the foliage spreading out two hundred feet above the ground formed a kind of second surface to the world—a canopy of tree top, the effect of which was to produce beneath it a green gloom into which the sun's rays could only penetrate at midday in spots and patches. Between this lofty upper shade and the ground grew a second forest of lesser age and size, through which the immense trunks of the larger and older trees shot up their stems a hundred feet without a branch; while below this secondary growth there grew a tangled mass of soft and twisted evergreen, hanging creeper, and matted tendril, so thick and impenetrable that movement to either side of a track just wide enough for a single person to pass, was impossible.

At intervals through this forest lie the villages or 'crooms' of the inhabitants. There are no animals larger than goats and small sheep; horses, mules, and cattle cannot exist in the climate, and all the carrying has to be done on the heads of men and women. The carriers are of every age; the load, balanced on the head, is steadied by one hand slightly touching it, and the long procession of bearers is seen following in single file the winding pathways which undulate through the forest. Here, then, lay the difficulty of supplying the needs of European troops moving any distance into the

country. To feed even 3,000 men while they marched 150 miles from the sea and back again, and to keep them supplied with munitions of war, meant a body of 9,000 carriers, who would also have to carry their own food, because the country had been entirely denuded by the Ashanti army in the earlier part of the year.

On December 17 Colley landed at Cape Coast and had an interview with the general commanding. Next day, in a letter to his sister, he foreshadowed the work he was to be employed on:

> At present everything is at a standstill from want of transport and supplies. The poor 42nd are to be sent out to sea again to cruise for another fortnight, as they are not yet wanted! As usual in these expeditions, the transport is the great difficulty, and, although a great deal has been done, it is still in a very unsatisfactory state, and I am inclined to think my task will be to take it in hand—not perhaps the pleasantest occupation, but any work that tends to help on the expedition is satisfactory. There are other difficulties, however. The transport is under the Control, and it is contrary to custom for combatant officers to serve under non-combatants. I have, however, expressed my willingness to waive this; and if I do, I don't think any others can object to serve under me. Anything to oil the wheels of the machine! [2]

Next day the diary contains the following brief entry: 'December 19. Saw Sir Garnet. Ordered to undertake transport. Started at 1.30 for Mansu. Reached Dunquah late.'

So here at Mansu, forty miles from Cape Coast, he sets to work to get this huge transport wheel of many-thousand-man power out of the deep rut in

[2] Cape Coast, December 18, 1873.

which it was more fixedly embedding itself every day. On December 25 he is back at Cape Coast again, with plans of organisation, movement, &c. Three days on the road had taught him much. Nominally 'the Control,' as it was called, in one of those strange ebullitions of unreasoned zeal of which the history of our army administration is full, had 8,000 carriers on its books, but for all the 'control' it possessed over half this number they might just as well have been inscribed in Domesday Book. Some of the tribes had deserted in large numbers, others were discontented, there were few officers available to put in charge of sections of the road. It was necessary to have many white men as supervisors. The native kings must be made responsible for the numbers of carriers required and for their continuance at work.

On the 26th Colley is back again at Dunquah. 'I am put in charge of the native tribes,' he writes on that day. For a few days following things seem to promise well, but the end of the year brought collapse. The forward movement of the white troops had now begun; two battalions and part of a third were on the road; the headquarters and the naval brigade had passed Mansu. It was a very critical moment in the expedition. All at once desertion on a scale greater than anything that had yet occurred set in.

A single extract from the military returns of the time will suffice to show the total breakdown of the transport. It is the morning state of the Transport Office at Yancoomassie, Assin, a station about twenty miles south of the Prah.

State showing the number of Transport available at Yancoomassie, Assin, 30*th December*, 1873.

Tribes	Chiefs	Head Men	Carriers	Deserters
Cape Coast . . .	6	12	120	82
Egimacoos 1st . .	1	7	53	20
Egimacoos 2nd . .	—	—	—	351
Goomoahs . . .	1	4	21	60
Ecomfees . . .	1	—	7	70
—	9	23	201	583

(Signed) W. Fowler, Capt.,
Commanding Transport.

Surely there has never before been recorded such a roll-call as this—laughable when looked on as the solemn military result of a parade, but of intensely tragic import to the men who then were toiling under climatic conditions so bad that delay, disease, and death were almost synonymous expressions. And yet the 'morning report' from Yancoomassie, Assin, was but a repetition of the roll-calls at all the transport stations along the line of advance—at a moment, too, when more than 8,000 carriers were required to keep the troops then on the road in movement to Coomassie.

These official reports, however, give no idea of the strain which the universal desertion of the tribes at this juncture put upon the officer who but a few days earlier had been given entire charge of tribes and transport. From a private letter written on January 22, we can gather something of that struggle against tremendous odds:

The papers will probably have given you some idea of my ups and downs, and I dare say treated you to a few

remarks about the scientific and theoretical officers who prove failures when put to practical work. But I hope they have not frightened you, as I hear at one time they were in some alarm about me at Cape Coast.

I wrote last from there when I saw my transport all melting round me. What I feared was soon realised. Messenger after messenger came, as fast as they ever did to Job, with bad news from all points. My first reserve deserted *en masse*; then the 600 carriers I had collected as transport for the third European regiment; and, finally, my last reserve went too. Then I had to sit down and write that I could not furnish the transport for the third regiment without stopping the passage of supplies up the road, and so endangering the other regiments; and the whole advance was stopped, and the third regiment re-embarked. To write that letter was the most bitter mortification I can ever remember having endured. I nearly cried as I did it. It seemed so hard to have to spoil such a successful expedition, and that the responsibility of the only failure should fall on me without my having the *chance* of helping it.

Three days of very hard work in the sun, followed by sleepless nights, while I was personally taking measures to prevent desertions, brought me down, and for a few days I was laid up with fever, but I carried on my work all the time. I made my plans for reforming our transports, and started to visit the deserting tribes. The first day I was obliged to walk a few miles, in consequence of the badness of the road, and I was very nearly done for, but the fever was off me; the next day I had gained strength, and before the week was out I was walking twenty miles a day, and had to leave my companions, having knocked them up.

Our week's raid was an interesting and a successful one. We surprised several villages at night, surrounding them, and taking all the inhabitants prisoners (to show them they were not so safe as they fancied by the distance from our line); frightened the chiefs thoroughly, and fined one of the kings, who immediately paid up in a bag of gold dust; and, after seven days' absence, reappeared with all the men of

the tribe so thoroughly organised and so well in hand that I have not had a desertion among them since. Other measures had also been successful; and if my first letter, reporting the failure of the transport, had thrown a gloom over the whole expedition, my next one, reporting that I had transport enough to meet all requirements and carry the troops to Coomassie, was received at headquarters with delight—the greater for its being so unexpected.

I went to the Prah a few days afterwards to see Sir Garnet and make the arrangements for the final advance. My reception was most cordial and flattering, and I know that none of the headquarter staff blame me for the first failure; they know I was put under a crumbling house which nothing could then save.

The transport work has been terribly hard. Out of sixteen officers, seven are down with fever—such fine, hard-working fellows. My only complaint against them is that they won't give in soon enough. Meanwhile, an army of carriers is moving to the front with as perfect regularity as Sir Garnet's soldiers, forming stations in rear, and maintaining the supplies as the troops advance; and if it was thought necessary to occupy Coomassie for some time, or even advance further, I should have no fear of another failure.

Sir Garnet has behaved most kindly throughout, and has certainly not withdrawn his confidence from me; almost each day he increases my powers. First I was in charge of the transport only, then of the tribes in the protectorate as well, and now of the whole line of communication from the army to the sea. It is curious that I should be the first instance, so far as I know, in our army of an appointment—that of 'officer in charge of the communication'—which has long existed in the Prussian army, and of the value and importance of which I had been most strongly impressed, and had lectured upon and urged for our army. But I think you must be sick of me and my transport and soldiering, and want to hear a little more about the country.[3]

[3] Mansu, January 22, 1874, to his sister.

Scattered through other letters written at the time there are many glimpses of the natives, not always to their disadvantage. One evening's march is thus described:

We started late, and it became pitch dark while we were still eight miles from our journey's end. We lost our way repeatedly and got into swamps, and though we ourselves walked the whole way to relieve our bearers they got tired and discouraged. At last we started the 'Old Hundredth,' as the only music we could think of they were likely to know, and they joined in and got quite jolly over it. The natives are not bad fellows, though not so manly as the Kaffirs; they are generally very honest, and it is a curious thing, with the enormous number of desertions we have had among the carriers, amounting to many thousands, they have always delivered their loads before running away.[4]

The delay caused by the desertion of carriers was of short continuance, and in some respects it even proved of advantage to the expedition. Over the Prah the forest for thirty miles was found deserted by the Ashantis; the native regiments were sent across the river; the Engineers pushed on road-making, and a broad practicable track was made from the Prah to the Adansi Hills, where the true frontier of the old Ashanti kingdom began. When Colley returned from his rapid raid into the Agoonah country, and wrote from Mansu on the night of January 14 that he hoped he had produced a certain salutary effect upon our allies—'but if I should be disappointed I am prepared to follow up with more forcible measures'—the transport problem was solved.

During the ten days following his return from

[4] Cape Coast, January 2, 1874, to his sister.

the Agoonah country Colley worked literally day and night to organise, officer, feed, and move the masses of men now pouring in upon the line at Dunquah and Mansu. On January 19 he was at Prahsu, on the 21st he was back at Mansu, on the 24th he is back again at Prahsu, having travelled all night. On the 25th he is at Accrofoom, at the foot of the Adansi Hills; but there he only rests for supper, and at midnight he crosses the hills, arriving at Fommanah at 3 A.M. At breakfast he sees the general in command, and later on he starts back to the Prah, 'taking stock along the road.' There has been a hitch somewhere. On the 27th the scant diary tells us: 'Travelled all night, knocking up stations as I passed, taking stock; reached Prahsu late.' On the 28th he is back again at Fommanah; thus in ten days he has covered 220 miles, written letters and orders of all kinds, inspected stations, hurried up convoys, and now he is at Fommanah ready for the general advance on Coomassie, which is to take place on the following morning, January 29. He has now ten days' supply for the whole force at Fommanah, and about six days' further supply some ten miles further on the road where the head of the advance is posted.

On the 30th he goes from Detchiasso back across the Adansi Hills again. It was well he made this retrograde march, for the Ashantis, disregarding for the moment any attempt to impede the progress of the troops in front, had suddenly sent a party to waylay the carriers in the rear; and coming across Colley's servant with another native fired at and wounded one of them. That was enough to carry panic along twenty miles of route. He restores

order, recrosses the Adansi Hills, and arrives at the headquarter camp at Insarfu. 'Late; scare among my carriers,' is the concluding entry in the short record of this long day's work.

From the Ashanti village of Insarfu (the headquarters of the British force on the night of January 30) was only a very small step forward to another little croom called Egginassie, where Lord Gifford's scouts had heard on the previous night the hum and drum of a large Ashanti force in the forest to the north; beyond that again lay a more important town called Amoaful, where reports agreed a large army was encamped. It is five-and-twenty years since the battle of Amoaful was fought, and long ago it has been forgotten. Nevertheless, it was a fight remarkable in many ways. On the English side there were 2,217 of all ranks; of the Ashanti side no proper estimate has ever been attempted—there were many thousands. The fight was a tough one, and the pluck and tactical quickness of the Ashantis in their own forests made them no mean foes.

The army advanced in a hollow oblong formation, through which ran the main track from Quarman to Amoaful, while on either side dense bush and forest covered all the ground. Close crowded on that track the army had moved forward at a snail's pace from Quarman to Egginassie; and it was only in the comparatively open ground afforded in the latter village that the long sinuous string of men was able to change its formation into something resembling the hollow oblong already mentioned. In the centre were the Commander-in-Chief and his staff. Egginassie, distant from Amoaful 900 yards in a straight